

**OIR Assessment Tool**  
***Employer Satisfaction Survey, 2008***  
***November 20, 2009***

Purpose of Survey:

*As mandated by the North Dakota University System, the Employer Satisfaction Survey is “to determine the level to which North Dakota institutions of higher education are meeting the needs of current employers.” (2008 UND Employer Satisfaction Survey, Office of Institutional Research, p. 1)*

1. The data collected addresses information relating to what university group or situation? (I.e., from whom is the university collecting this information? Whose perceptions are we reading?)

*The survey was sent to employers of graduates from December 2005, May 2006, and August 2006.*

*Employer information was gleaned from graduates returning the 2007 Placement Survey who opted in to provide employer contact information (N=329) and from a request to the North Dakota FINDET office (N=206). Of the 535 surveys sent, 129 were returned (24% response rate).*

2. How often is this tool used and analyzed? What time of year?

*Data has been collected every two years beginning Fall 2004. This is the third dataset (Fall 2004, Fall 2006, Fall 2008).*

3. To whom does the assessment group believe that an analysis of this report would be beneficial? In other words, what individuals, departments, or programs need this information in order to have reliable information to ‘close the loop’ on their assessment process?

*The survey collected information on four specific areas—(1) knowledge and understanding, (2) qualities generally expected of employees, (3) general skills, and (4) specialized skills.*

*The results would be of interest to several across campus—Enrollment Services (recruitment re satisfaction of UND graduates in job performance), Career Services, Career Counseling Services, Essential Studies Committee, Student Success Center, and academic departments and chairs.*

4. Are there findings which may be of potential interest to other parties on campus? Who should be encouraged to access these findings?

*Refer to question 3 response.*

5. Who is responsible to provide the assessment group the information for this report?

*Office of Institutional Research*

6. What UND student learning goals are assessed?

- a. Use Y, N, ? to indicate whether the instrument collects data relevant to each of the following Institutional and/or General Education goals:

\_\_\_Y\_\_\_ 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)

*Written communication*

*Verbal communication*

\_\_\_Y\_\_\_ 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)

*Critical thinking (e.g., evaluating information, making decisions)*

*Ability to translate theory into practice*

\_\_\_Y\_\_\_ 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)

*Creativity (identifies new approaches to problems)*

\_\_\_Y\_\_\_ 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)

*Advanced computer (e.g., spreadsheets, databases)*

\_\_\_\_\_ 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)

\_\_\_Y\_\_\_ 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)

*Understanding of international business environment*

*Understanding of systems and organizations (e.g., political systems, markets, cultures)*

*Knowledge of peoples and cultures from other countries*

*Empathy (understands the situations, feelings, or motives of others)*

\_\_\_Y\_\_\_ 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)

*Willingness to learn*

\_\_\_\_\_ 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

- b. Additional goals

*None.*

7. What are the findings/results of this tool?

*A multiattribute approach was used to define each of the four specific areas surveyed. The number of items that represented each area were—knowledge and understanding (8), qualities generally expected of employees (10), general skills (13), and specialized skills (7). Employers were asked to rate items on five-point scales regarding their importance for successful performance of the job and to rate their satisfaction with the employee’s*

*knowledge or skills when hired. The five points of the scale were extremely important or satisfied (5), very important or satisfied (4), somewhat important or satisfied (3), not very important or satisfied (2), and not at all important or satisfied (1). Means were reported for importance and satisfaction, along with gap differences.*

- a. From Question 5a above: For the goals with a Y or ?, describe the relevant findings/results from this survey:

*G1. Communication*

- *Written communication—Importance 4.08, Satisfaction 4.10, Gap -0.02*
- *Oral communication—Importance 4.33, Satisfaction 4.23, Gap -0.11*

*G2. Thinking and reasoning—critical thinking*

- *Critical thinking (e.g., evaluating information, making decisions)—Importance 4.29, Satisfaction 4.16, Gap -0.14*
- *Ability to translate theory into practice—Importance 3.66, Satisfaction 3.92, Gap 0.13*

*G3. Thinking and reasoning—creative thinking*

- *Creativity (identifies new approaches to problems)—Importance 4.05, Satisfaction 3.97, Gap -0.12*

*G4. Thinking and reasoning—quantitative reasoning*

- *Advanced computer (e.g., spreadsheets, databases)—Importance 3.31, Satisfaction 3.91, Gap 0.50*

*G6. Diversity*

- *Understanding of international business environment—Importance 1.90, Satisfaction 2.62, Gap 0.66*
- *Understanding of systems and organizations (e.g., political systems, markets, cultures)—Importance 2.50, Satisfaction 3.18, Gap 0.60*
- *Knowledge of peoples and cultures from other countries—Importance 2.81, Satisfaction 3.23, Gap 0.40*
- *Empathy (understands the situations, feelings, or motives of others)—Importance 4.13, Satisfaction 4.20, Gap 0.05*

*G7. Lifelong learning*

- *Willingness to learn—Importance 4.50, Satisfaction 4.48, Gap -0.02*

- b. Other findings/results

*To be inclusive of all items that represented the four primary areas surveyed, the following comments provide aggregate results.*

- *Employers were asked about the importance of various qualifications in hiring (previous work experience, specialized training or skills, specialized certification, degree in a specific major field, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree). Having a bachelor's degree and it being in a specific major field, along with specialized training or skills and work experience were the most valued by employers.*
- *The employee's understanding of job-related information and knowledge in the respective field had a higher importance rating than the other three areas.*
- *All items for employee knowledge and understanding (knowledge in employee's field of study, understanding of job-related information,*

*specific technical knowledge required for the job, knowledge of specific computer applications required for job, understanding of organizational context, understanding of international business environment, understanding of systems and organizations, and knowledge of peoples and cultures from other countries) reported positive gaps (i.e., satisfaction mean was higher than importance mean). Though all reported positive gaps, understanding of international business environment was the only item to have a mean below 3, where 3 represented 'somewhat satisfied' (see 7.a.G6 above).*

- *Items representing qualities generally expected of employees (flexibility, creativity, empathy, reliability, integrity, self-discipline, positive attitude toward work, willingness to learn, understands and takes directions for work assignments, and accepts responsibility for consequences of actions) all had mean importance ratings above 4 (very important); and all but creativity had mean satisfaction rating above 4 (creativity had 3.97). Of the ten items, eight (8) had negative gaps though the gaps were relatively negligible. Flexibility and creativity showed the largest (-0.18 and -0.12, respectively).*
- *Of the items representing general skills (written communication, verbal communication, listening to others, organizing information for presentation, critical thinking, computation—math, reading, basic computer, advanced computer, use of equipment or technology specific to the job, leadership, teamwork, and customer service), employers reported being 'very satisfied' with ten of the 13 skills. The greatest positive gaps occurred with organizing information for presentation, computation, basic and advanced computer, and use of equipment or technology specific to the job. Other than noting previously that written communication had a negative gap, verbal communication, listening to others, critical thinking, and teamwork also reported negative gaps.*
- *Regarding specialized skills (management of organizational resources, fluency in a language other than English, project management, negotiation, mentoring or coaching colleagues, ability to set goals and allocate time to achieve them, and ability to translate theory into practice), fluency in a language other than English had the lowest importance (1.81) and the ability to set goals and allocate time to achieve them was of most importance (3.90). All skills had positive gaps (range of 0.13 to 0.56) with the exception of ability to set goals and allocate time to achieve them, but it was negligible (-0.01).*
- *Overall, employers were 'very satisfied' in the four areas assessed but the satisfaction means of all have been declining from 2004 to present.*
- *Employers were asked about their overall satisfaction with the employee's knowledge and UND's mean scores "exceed the mean scores for all NDUS institutions in each of the overall satisfaction categories" (p. 10) and had a #1 rank on the likelihood of hiring other graduates of the school.*

8. What evidence is provided or should be provided to support the results of the survey?

*Data from the survey are presented well.  
The Alumni Outcomes Survey may provide additional insight but the graduates/employees for both are not from parallel years. The last Alumni Outcomes Survey represented alumni graduating in December 2004, May 2005, and August 2005. The Employer Satisfaction Survey was sent to employers of graduates from December 2005, May 2006, and August 2006.*

9. What evidence does the assessment group believe should be collected/compiled for the next accreditation visit?

*It may be helpful to gather more specific data for the employee skills with which the employers are less than very satisfied.*

10. Is this tool a direct measure, an indirect measure, or a non-measure of student learning?

*Indirect measure.*

11. Does this tool empower individuals or the university to better understand and assess student learning at the university? If so, how?

*Yes, it gives one benchmark for areas of student learning which might be deficient in the eyes of our students' future employers, thus identifying areas in which we might want to concentrate more effort.*

12. Is there a better way to obtain or report the data to be analyzed?

*No.*

13. Does the tool reflect a culture of assessment at UND?

*Yes.*

14. Does the tool need increased university or administrative support or faculty involvement in order to make it more useable or effective?

*Efforts to increase employer response rate might be helpful, though the response rate was 24 percent.*

15. Does the assessment group need any administrative insight or guidance in order to analyze the tool effectively?

*No.*

16. What value does the committee place on this tool for helping to achieve the university's assessment plan?

*This is valuable in ascertaining possible deficiencies in our students' skill sets in the eyes of their future employers.*

17. Review Summary (one or two sentences)

*This survey could be of interest to a number of groups across campus. It affirms that employers are, in general, very satisfied with our graduates' skills, but indicates a few areas in which improvement might be needed.*

18. Recommendations of the Reviewers

*The results of this survey should be disseminated to faculty, Department Chairs, Deans, the Provost and other Vice Presidents, and the University President.*

19. What might faculty want to know about this survey? (Please provide one to two paragraphs describing some findings from this survey. These paragraphs will be forwarded to academic departments as a means of keeping them informed about the existence of information that might be useful to them.)

*The Employee Satisfaction Survey collected information on four specific areas—(1) knowledge and understanding, (2) qualities generally expected of employees, (3) general skills, and (4) specialized skills. The survey found that in most skill areas employers are very satisfied with the skills of our graduates. However, there are some skill areas in which graduates are perceived by their employers to fall short—most significantly, in the category of diversity, our students' understanding of the international business environment, understanding of systems and organizations, and knowledge of peoples and cultures from other cultures. Interestingly, this corresponds with a perceived lack in these areas indicated in the Alumni Outcomes Survey as well. These results seem to validate the perceived need on the part of the university to bolster educational offerings and the importance placed on them in areas related to diversity. On balance, however, this survey delivers the positive news that employers are, in general, very satisfied, with the knowledge level of our graduates; at a level, in fact, that exceeds the mean scores for all NDUS institutions in each of the overall satisfaction categories.*

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